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## CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**TIM HOLDEN**

17TH DISTRICT, PENNSYLVANIA

[www.holden.house.gov](http://www.holden.house.gov)

2417 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-3817  
(202) 225-5546

### Congressman Holden on Passage of the 2007 Farm Bill

We are a diverse country when it comes to our agriculture interests, but we all came together, and we have sowed a Farm Bill that is fair. This Farm Bill makes historic investments in conservation, nutrition and renewable energy, while maintaining a strong safety net for America's farmers and ranchers. We incorporated some new ideas and important reforms in this Farm Bill, focusing farm program benefits so they get to real farmers and boosting investment in programs that help those who haven't received benefits through the Farm Bill before.

As Chairman of the Conservation, Credit, Energy, and Research Subcommittee, I was pleased to have such a strong conservation title. We included a \$4.3 billion increase in conservation funding, which is a 35 percent increase over the 2002 Farm Bill. In this bill, we have a 100 percent increase in farmland preservation funding. We increase funds for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, which is a vital conservation program across the nation, by 50 percent. For the Chesapeake Bay region, we have a \$150 million program for river restoration. Conservation projects have allowed many farms to meet environmental regulations in this changing industry. Conservation programs help to preserve farm and ranch land, to improve water quality and quantity, and to provide enhanced soil conservation, air quality, and wildlife habitat on working lands. Conservation benefits are enjoyed by rural and urban citizens alike.

The 2007 Farm Bill will lead us in a new direction toward becoming more energy independent. In this bill, we have \$2.4 billion in the energy title. The Department of Agriculture has had a successful history in providing support for programs, like guaranteed loans, that could help to drive our renewable fuels industry. The biofuels and bioenergy market is rapidly growing and changing. We provide \$2 billion in loan guarantees so we can help the infant industry of cellulosic ethanol and biodiesel. We must take advantage of our agricultural and natural resources, which are so abundant in this country, so that we can take steps toward no longer being dependent upon the continuous flow of oil from the Middle East.

### Conservation

The Farm Bill extends important land reserve programs and simplifies and improves the Conservation Security Program. It also substantially increases funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives and Farmland Protection Programs, which are very important to Pennsylvania farmers. It also includes several provisions to encourage cooperation between USDA and producers or other entities to deliver conservation programs, including a regional watershed program and a conservation cooperative

☐ SRBC OFFICE BUILDING  
1721 NORTH FRONT STREET, SUITE 105  
HARRISBURG, PA 17102  
(717) 234-5904

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POTTSVILLE, PA 17901  
(570) 622-4212

☐ 4918 KUTZTOWN ROAD  
TEMPLE, PA 19560  
(610) 921-3502

partnership initiative, which will benefit the Chesapeake Bay region. Further, the Farm Bill would allow USDA to facilitate the development of private-sector, market-based approaches for environmental goods and services produced by farmers and forest land owners. This initiative would allow USDA to initiate programs such as those that may promote "nutrient trading" in the Chesapeake Bay region, to help communities comply with environmental regulations by providing incentives to farmers and forest land owners to implement conservation measures on their lands.

The Farm Bill also creates the "Chesapeake Bay Program for Nutrient Reduction and Sediment Control." This program would require the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to develop a comprehensive plan to restore and protect the Chesapeake Bay watershed, specifically beginning with the Susquehanna River. The plan will provide for proven technologies and innovative approaches to improve water quality and quantity; restore, enhance and preserve wildlife habitat; and increase economic opportunity for rural communities and producers. A total of \$150 million in mandatory funding would support this program through 2012.

The Farm Bill also establishes a new pilot program for the Chesapeake Bay watershed to assist producers in comprehensive planning before they submit applications for any of USDA's conservation programs. Assistance under this pilot is intended to help producers choose the best type of assistance to address the resource needs of their farms, to help meet the environmental goals of the community where the farm is located. The Farm Bill would make available \$5 million for each fiscal year for the comprehensive conservation planning pilot program.

### **Energy**

The Farm Bill includes a Federal loan guarantee program for biorefineries and biofuel production plants. It also reauthorizes and improves several important biomass, bio-based product, and bioenergy programs.

### **Dairy**

The Farm Bill extends the Milk Income Loss Contract Program through 2012, which provides support for farmers whenever the fluid milk price drops below a set level. The bill also provides tools for dairy producers and processors to better manage the volatile nature of the industry. Dairy is the largest agricultural enterprise in Pennsylvania, which is fourth largest dairy state in the nation.

### **Research**

The Farm Bill reauthorizes many important research programs and establishes new initiatives for specialty crops and for bioenergy and bio-based products research. To maximize limited resources, it seeks to ensure greater integration in research efforts and

establishes a National Agricultural Research Program Office to coordinate the programs and activities of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's research agencies.

### **Credit**

The Farm Bill creates a new loan guarantee program for producers to carry out conservation projects. It makes improvements to Farm Service Agency lending programs, and makes changes to insurance premium payments required for Farm Credit System institutions.